WOMEN'S CAMPUS SAFETY AUDIT GUIDE

METRAC
and
COUNCIL OF ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Preface

Ensuring campus safety for women has been an increasing concern of the college and university communities in Canada. In considering what steps it might take to enhance safety for women on campus, the Council of Ontario Universities Committee on the Status of Women identified in the women's safety audit kit developed by the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) a unique and potentially very helpful tool that could be adapted for use by colleges and universities.

Assisted by a grant from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ontario Women's Directorate, COU asked METRAC to develop a campus-specific safety audit kit. A draft kit was introduced to the post-secondary community in Ontario at a workshop held in February 1991. Incorporating amendments made as a result of the workshop, the women's campus safety audit guide is now being made available within Ontario and to colleges and universities across the country.

The COU Committee on the Status of Women extends special thanks to the members of the project advisory committee: Carol Boettcher (Niagara College); Pam MacDonald (York University); Wendy Vermeersch (Sheridan College); Jacquelyn Wolf (University of Toronto); Laura Selleck (COU) and to Pat Marshall, and Lisa Rouleau of METRAC, to Connie Guberman, the consultant contracted by METRAC to revise and adapt this Guide, as well as to the individuals on a number of campuses who assisted in background research. July 1991

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This Campus Safety Audit Kit

is for women

who feel unsafe

in the campus environment

and

Who want to do something

about it. But of course,

it will work for everyone.

It is about making public and semi-public places safer and more comfortable for women, focusing specifically on preventing sexual harassment and assault.

It's about improving the safety of places like:

- classrooms
- locker rooms
- library study areas and stacks
- walkways and paths
- parking lots
- bus stops
- residences
- campus grounds
- anywhere that makes you feel unsafe

And it's about improving the non-physical environment to be safer for women.

If it's safer for women, it's safer for everyone.

What is ε Safety Audit?

A safety audit is a close evaluation of the physical environment for safety factors. It is an educational tool and an action plan.

The audit looks at the environment -- at how a space is put together and how it enhances or reinforces a sense of safety. i.e. What's the lighting like? Would anyone hear you call for help? What improvements would you like to see?

The goal of safety audits is to improve the physical environment in ways that reduce the opportunities for sexual harassment or sexual assaults and to make the environment more comfortable and accessible to all. An environment designed to discourage sexual assault will minimize the opportunity for other kinds of assaults and for crimes involving property.

The process of the audit can be used to respond to the most obvious of safety threats such as burned out light bulbs which can be the difference between seeing an attacker at a distance far enough away to escape or not. And it can also be used to evaluate more complex safety threats which include policies and practices.

Safety audits are concrete and practical. They are part of changing the world to make it safer for women, and better for everyone. The process of the women's safety audit has been used successfully with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the Metro Toronto Police Force, by planners to audit High Park, Toronto's largest park, and by communities throughout the province.

From working with women over the years and from talking to students, faculty and staff on campuses across the province, it's clear to us at METRAC that women know a lot about the environment and the impact of design on their sense of safety that traditional experts don't know.

It's still the case that architects, urban planners, and the police are usually men, or are trained to see things from a male perspective. They may not mean to, but they often don't understand what it's like to be a woman, alone, late at night, waiting for a bus, walking to her car in a dark and isolated parking lot, or returning to her residence from the library along an unlit path.

The safety audit process validates women's experience of the environment by acknowledging that women are the experts of their experience.

If it sounds simple, it is. You don't have to have a degree in architecture or urban planning. Living as a woman -- studying, working, teaching -- has given each of us a lifetime of experience and knowledge about what works and doesn't work -- about where we feel comfortable and where we don't.

What is Violence Against Women?

Over the last ten years, women's countless stories have taught us about the pervasiveness and impact of violence against women. What used to be seen as a private event has rightfully become a public and social issue; and governments, universities and colleges, and other social institutions increasingly recognize their responsibility to address the issue of sexual assault by improving women's safety. They can no longer silently assume, as they once did that if a woman is sexually assaulted, it's "her problem", or "her fault."

The fear of sexual assault has limited women's participation in public and community life. Women are often afraid to go out at night. In fact, one study showed that 56% of urban Canadian women feel unsafe walking alone in their own neighbourhoods after dark, while only 18% of men said they feel unsafe in the same circumstances.[1]

Think of your own life and what you are afraid to do, or how your fears of being attacked have affected your life.

- Do you make sure you don't walk alone after dark?
- Do you try and avoid night classes?
- Are you apprehensive about using campus facilities (such as the athletic centre) when you are alone or at night?
- Do you breathe a sigh of relief when you arrive home safely?

Unfortunately, women's fears are based in a reality of violence in their lives. 27% of Canadian women can expect to be sexually assaulted at some point in their lives.[2]

Sexual assault is something women don't like to talk about. Only a small percentage of sexual assaults are ever reported to police or other authorities.[3]

There are many reasons why women don't report sexual assaults. In the past, many women have been blamed, or have not been believed when they reported an assault.

Women often feel shame that their bodies have been violated, partly because of the negative social values surrounding women's bodies and sexuality.

If you are not aware of sexual assaults on your campus, it's not because they haven't happened. It's because they have not been reported.

One of your campus' objectives for the audit might include evaluating the system of reporting and responding to sexual assaults in order to create a safer and more affirming environment for women.

Do sexual assaults happen on campus?

Sexual assault is pervasive in our society as a whole. Assaults occur in private and public places. Despite what we may wish to be true, acts of violence against women such as sexual harassment and sexual assault, happen everywhere -- even on university and college campuses.

Acts of sexual assault happen every day on university and college campuses. In a recent U.S. survey of students on 32 campuses, one out of every six female students reported being a victim of rape or attempted rape during the preceding year.[4]

No matter how large or small the student population, whether the campus is located in a city, suburb or town, in Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western or Central parts of the province, sexual assaults against women -- women students, faculty, administrators, support staff, kitchen and cleaning staff -- are perpetrated.

The perpetrators are not always strangers. In fact, sexual assaults are more often committed by someone known to the victim. Statistics, studies, and personal accounts by victims and by counsellors show that of the women who are sexually assaulted on campus, the attacker will be an acquaintance of the victim in 80% of the incidents.[5] They are men the women had reason to trust -- a date, a fellow student or co-worker.

'Date rape' as it is often called, is sexual assault perpetrated by someone a woman knows, and has been described as the most under-reported crime in our society. Women who have been assaulted on a date are reluctant to report the assault for fear they won't be believed or that they were responsible.

Why women's safety?

Some people ask, "why women's safety?" Our answer is simple: because women are much more at risk of being sexually assaulted in our society.

In the past, when safety for people in general was addressed, then sexual assault prevention was ignored.

In our experience of auditing many different environments, we have found that if the safety needs of women are met, then public and semi-public places will be better for everyone, including men, children, elderly people, poor people, and those who are disabled or a member of a visible minority.

What can participating in a safety audit do? *By changing features in the physical environment, will the campus be a safer place?*

The goal of safety audits is to improve the physical environment in ways that reduce the opportunities for sexual assaults and to effectively make the campus a more equitable environment.

By participating in an audit each member of the campus community has an opportunity to document her/his experience of the campus environment and to have input into the process of change.

It is important to acknowledge that women experience and evaluate their space in a different way than do men and that, in general, people in positions of power or privilege experience fear differently. The environment is experienced differently according to a person's ethnicity, race, class, age, ability and sexuality. In the process of the audit, no woman's fears are trivialized or ignored.

Improving the physical environment is only one piece of a complex puzzle. Women's safety is affected not only by the physical design of spaces but also by a variety of non-physical design factors such as policies, practices and services.

Universities and colleges must examine environments that encourage a climate of sexual exploitation and must challenge established social values, attitudes and practices which are prejudicial to women.

The Scope of the Audit:

The process of establishing a safe campus is an ongoing one. Not all necessary changes will happen at once -- but the results of a thorough safety audit of the campus will help strategic planners identify and prioritize changes in the environment which will affect the experience of safety on campus as defined by those who study, work and live there. It will help university and college senior administrators respond to women's safety concerns.

Planning a comprehensive campus-wide safety audit is very different than organizing an audit of one specific environment such as the library, a parking lot or the athletic facilities. A thorough audit of physical and non-physical features requires a commitment of months of time, funding and systems support.

For example, the planning of the audit may require the establishment of a special committee or Task Force, the secondment or hiring of individuals to co-ordinate activities, and the committed support for the audit objectives and process from all levels of campus administration, faculty, staff and student bodies.

Organizing an audit of a specific area also involves commitments of time, funding and systems support, but on a smaller scale.

For example, an audit may be organized to cover one building or one parking lot; or the routes to and from the transit system or library; or an audit of the entire campus might be organized on a smaller scale -- from the point of view of one or two factors such as lighting or signage.

Each campus community will want to determine what is manageable as short and long term goals and to define its own strategies for implementing the audit using the components explored in this kit.

GETTING ORGANIZED:

The survey as a first step:

A first step in the ongoing process of establishing a safe campus is to identify where those who study, work, play, and live on campus feel most unsafe or uncomfortable. A survey distributed throughout the campus community to staff, students, faculty and guests is one method of obtaining this input.

Suggested survey questions include:

1) Are you male or female?

2) Please rank your general feeling of personal safety or comfort on campus.

3) Have you ever restricted your campus activities out of fear for your personal safety?

4) Have you ever experienced an incident when you have felt unsafe, vulnerable or at risk of sexual assault on or near the campus?

5) Please list five specific places on or around the campus where and when you feel most unsafe.

6) Are you aware of any policies on campus which address personal safety concerns?

7) Please comment on what would allow you to feel safer on campus.

Who should be part of the campus audit?

All those who live, work and study on campus should have an opportunity to participate in the audit in order for the process and the results of the audit to be comprehensive, and reflective of the wide range of personal safety needs. A conscious effort must be made to have different perspectives represented on the audit team.

For example, members of the audit team should reflect the range of racial and cultural diversity on campus. Audit team membership ought to include the perspectives of women who:

- use a wheelchair
- are visually or hearing impaired
- are lesbian
- are elderly
- are carrying large packages or an armload of papers and books.

Audits of designated areas should be organized in consultation with and the participation of the range of offices on campus. These include but are not limited to:

- student government/councils
- women's centres
- faculty and staff unions
- senior administrators
- continuing education faculty, staff and students
- food and cleaning services
- security
- physical plant/campus services
- residence dons
- appropriate consultative bodies and committees.

On the following page is a sample list of related campus and community committees, offices, and departments that should have input and representation in the audit.

Audits should be organized with the participation and support of relevant departments, committees, offices, and associations. Listed below are some of these. By filling in the blanks, you will be preparing an initial contact list for conducting an audit on your campus.

	NAME	PHONE
President's Office		
Dean of Students		
Human Resources		
Educational Resources		
Corporate Services		
Operations		
Faculty Association		
Staff Association		
Cleaning Services		
Physical Resources		
Building Services		
Planning Office		
Police		
Security		
Residences/Housing		
Parking		
Athletic Facilities		
Health and Safety		

	NAME	PHONE
Counselling Centre		
Women's Centre Equity Co-ordinator		
Ombudsperson		
Status of Women Office		
Sexual Harassment Office		
Disability Office		
Health Centre		

Relevant committees with specific mandates involving safety, for example Committee on Violence Against Women:

COMMITTEE	CONTACT	PHONE

Community:

Sexual Assault
Crisis Centre _____

Neighbouring
businesses _____

_____

Neighbouring Residents
Association _____

Transit Representatives _____

Police _____

Elected Representative _____

When should the audit be conducted?

In order to ensure that a thorough assessment of the campus environment is conducted, audits should be done during different seasons of the year, different times of the day and night, and during different days of the week/weekends.

You may want to go back to the same place more than once to check up on how well or poorly the place is maintained. Also, this way you can see what it's like at different times of the day, or week, or year.

Seasonal variations greatly affect how we experience an environment. For example, audits of outdoor spaces have quite different results when tree branches and bushes are bare in winter from when trees and plants are in full bloom in summer and might effectively hide a perpetrator. Or when the parking lots are dry and free of ice from when they are full of puddles or surrounded by snowbanks which block sightlines.

Doing audits during hours of darkness or at times when women are most isolated and feel least safe is important. It's the only way to know if there is a problem with lighting -- one of the most important safety features.

Planning the first meeting:

Once key participants are contacted and goals are defined it is time to prepare and plan for the audit:

- hold sessions at different times of day to inform students, faculty, and staff about the audit process and to encourage their participation
- determine scope and objectives
- prepare an audit workplan and schedule including follow-up meeting dates
- advertise the audit date, location and purpose
- select and train audit team leaders ahead of scheduled audit date
- pre-select sites to be audited based on feedback from user survey
- have copies of relevant maps/floor plans to distribute to audit participants
- designate a note-taker prior to audit teams departure
- arrange for audit team leaders to collect checklists when completed
- determine who will co-ordinate the statistical and anecdotal data

- set a date to present the findings to the appropriate offices/departments

- develop short and long term strategies for change including financial considerations

Materials Required for the Audit:

- copies of checklists
- clipboards and pens
- flashlights
- a camera, if available
- a tape recorder, if note-taking is difficult
- appropriate clothing and footwear

also,

- make sure you have safe transportation home from the audit

HOW TO GO ABOUT THE AUDIT:

- The place to start is with your own experience.

Using the Checklist:

From working on audits, we've found that it's very helpful to use a checklist of factors to consider like the one provided in this kit. No matter how good your memory is, you won't remember everything, so it's important to take good notes.

This checklist is based on concrete situations that are part of women's lives on campus. It takes the whole picture and breaks it down into the different parts -- the different factors that together create an unsafe and uncomfortable environment.

The checklist contains both closed and open-ended questions. While the open-ended questions provide less quantifiable data, they allow for anecdotal responses and space for unanticipated possibilities.

Taking notes directly onto a checklist helps later when it comes to organizing your comments and suggestions.

The checklist is meant to be used in diverse campus conditions and should be adapted as necessary to meet the needs of your own campus.

You might want to consider augmenting the checklist with a map or floor plan of the area being audited and mark the risk areas with your own set of symbols.

What to do on the audit:

- When you look at a space, think about how you use it. Ask a lot of questions.

Think about the place that bothers you in terms of real life situations:

- Suppose you were walking alone here late at night?
- Suppose you had to wait there for someone to come and pick you up?
- Is this recessed doorway a possible assault site?
- Is this accessible to people using wheelchairs, walkers or canes?
- What if you had your children with you, or were carrying lots of books?
- Is it different in winter? or in the rain?
- Are there fewer people around at different times of the day, week, or year?

The questions you're trying to answer are:

- *"Why don't I like this place?"*
- *"When and why do I feel uncomfortable here?"*
- *"What changes would make me feel safer?"*

Taking the time to consider every item on the checklist helps to give a comprehensive impression of the space.

If the place being audited is large or complex, then the audit and notes should focus on one part at a time. For example, when METRAC was auditing Toronto's subway system, 3 to 15 copies of the checklist were filled in for each subway station, depending on its size and complexity. Different sheets were filled in for the platforms, the tunnels, the passenger pick-ups, etc. where any comments on lighting, availability of help, and other factors were considered.

On college and university campuses, separate checklists might be used for auditing outdoor and indoor areas and for each floor of every building.

The checklist can help audit team members work together to incorporate diverse experiences. One person may feel comfortable in an area and want to hurry through it. But following the checklist can help you say "Hey, wait a minute. We need to check for unlocked doors and possible assault sites before we move on."

During the audit is not the time to discuss the validity of a woman's feelings of discomfort or fear -- she is the expert of her <u>own</u> experiences. What she says she feels is legitimate.

***** Photocopying at 140% will enlarge the checklist on the following pages to 8½ x 11".***

CAMPUS SAFETY AUDIT CHECKLIST

□ OUTDOORS □ INDOORS
GENERAL AREA: _____

SPECIFIC LOCATION: _____
DATE: _____ DAY: _____ TIME: _____

REASON FOR AUDITING THE AREA: _____
_____

1. General Impressions

•Your gut reactions: _____
_____
_____

•What 5 words best describe the place?

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____

2. Lighting

•Impression of lighting:
□ very poor □ poor □ satisfactory □ good
□ very good □ too dark □ too bright
•Is the lighting even? □ yes □ no
•How many lights are out? _____
•What proportion of lights are out? _____
•Are you able to identify a face 25 metres away?
□ yes □ no

•Do you know where/whom to call if lights are out, broken, not yet turned on, etc.?

□ yes □ no

•Outdoors: Is the lighting obscured by trees or bushes? □ yes □ no

•How well does the lighting illuminate pedestrian walkways and sidewalks?

□ very poorly □ poorly □ satisfactorily
□ well □ very well

•How clearly does the lighting illuminate directional signs or maps?

□ very poorly □ poorly □ satisfactorily
□ well □ very well

3. Signage

•Is there a sign (i.e. room no., building name) identifying where you are? □ yes □ no

•If no, are there directional signs or maps nearby which can help you identify where you are?

□ yes □ no

•Are there signs which show you where to get emergency assistance if needed?

□ yes □ no

•Are there signs which direct you to wheelchair access? □ yes □ no

•Do exit doors identify where they exit to?

□ yes □ no

•Is there information posted describing the hours the building is legitimately open?

□ yes □ no

•Impression of overall signage:

□ very poor □ poor □ satisfactory □ good
□ very good

•What signs should be added?

4. Sightlines

•Can you clearly see what's up ahead? ☐ yes ☐ no
•If no, why not? Indoors: ☐ sharp corners ☐ walls
☐ pillars
Outdoors: ☐ bushes ☐ fences ☐ hill
☐ other _____
•Are there places someone could be hiding?
☐ yes ☐ no
•If yes, where?

•What would make it easier to see?
E.g.: ☐ transparent materials like glass
☐ angled corners ☐ security mirrors
☐ trimmed bushes ☐ snow cleared
☐ vehicles moved
•Other comments? _____
_____
_____

5. Isolation -- Eye Distance

•At the time of your audit, does the area feel isolated? ☐ yes ☐ no
•How many people are likely to be around?

-In the early morning:	☐ none	☐ a few	☐ several	☐ many
-During the day:	☐ none	☐ a few	☐ several	☐ many
-In the evening:	☐ none	☐ a few	☐ several	☐ many
-Late at night: (after 10 pm)	☐ none	☐ a few	☐ several	☐ many

•Is it easy to predict when people will be around?
☐ yes ☐ no

•Is there a monitor or surveillance system?
□ yes □ no □ don't know
•Other comments? _____
_____
_____

6. Isolation -- Ear Distance

•How far away is the nearest person to hear a call for help? _____ □ don't know
•How far away is the nearest emergency service such as an alarm, security personnel, crisis telephone? _____ □ don't know
•Can you see a telephone, or a sign directing you to emergency assistance?
□ yes □ no
•Is the area patrolled? □ yes □ no □ don't know
•If yes, how frequently? □ every hour
□ once per afternoon/evening □ don't know
•Other comments? _____
_____
_____

7. Movement Predictors (a predictable or unchangeable route or path)

•How easy is it to predict a woman's movements? (e.g. her route)? □ very easy □ somewhat obvious
□ no way of knowing
•Is there an alternative well-lit and frequently travelled route or path available?
□ yes □ no □ don't know
•Can you tell what is at the other end of the path, tunnel, or walkway? □ yes □ no

•Are there corners, alcoves, or bushes where someone could hide and wait for you?

□ yes □ no

•Other comments? _____

_____

_____

8. Possible Assault Sites

Indoors:

- Are there empty rooms that should be locked?

  □ yes □ no
- Are there small, well-defined areas?

  E.g.: □ stairwells □ recessed doorways or □ lockers □ unlocked closets □ elevators

Outdoors:

- Are there small, confined areas where you would be hidden from view?

  E.g.: □ between garbage bins □ unlocked equipment or utility shed □ alley or laneway □ recessed doorway □ construction site
- Other: _____

9. Escape Routes

•How easy would it be for an offender to disappear?

□ very easy □ quite easy □ not very easy

•Is there more than one exit?

□ yes □ no □ don't know

10. Nearby Land Uses

•What is the surrounding or nearby land used for?
- □ stores □ offices □ restaurants □ factories
- □ residential houses and streets □ busy traffic
- □ heavily treed/wooded area □ river bank
- □ parking lots □ other campus buildings
- □ don't know
- Other: _____

•Can you identify who owns or maintains nearby land? □ yes □ no

•Impressions of nearby land use:
- □ very poor □ poor □ satisfactory □ good
- □ very good

11. Maintenance

•Impressions of maintenance: □ very poor □ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

•Is there litter lying around? □ yes □ no

•Do you know to whom maintenance concerns should be reported? □ yes □ no

•From your experience, how long do repairs generally take? □ one day □ within one week □ from 1-3 weeks □ more than 3 weeks □ don't know

12. Factors That Make the Place More Human

•Does the place feel cared for? □ yes □ no

•Does the place feel abandoned? □ yes □ no

•Why? _____

•Are there graffiti on the walls? □ yes □ no

•In your opinion are there racist or sexist slogans/signs/images on the walls?
□ yes □ no

•Are there signs of vandalism? □ yes □ no

•Would other materials, tones, textures or colours improve your sense of safety? □ yes □ no

•Other comments? _____

_____

_____

13. Overall Design

•Impressions of overall design: □ very poor □ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

•If you weren't familiar with the place, would it be easy to find your way around? □ yes □ no

•Does the place "make sense"? □ yes □ no

•Is the place too spread out? □ yes □ no

•Are there a confusing number of levels? □ yes □ no

•Other comments? _____

_____

Other _____

_____

_____

14. Improvements

•What improvements would you like to see?

•Do you have any specific recommendations?

Please send any in-progress or completed documentation or reports to:

METRAC
158 Spadina Road
Toronto, Ontario
M5R 2T8

(416) 392-3135 FAX (416) 392-3136

Auditing the non-physical environment: policies, practices and services

Women's safety is affected not only by the physical design of spaces -- whether there are enough lights, emergency services such as telephones or the number of other people around -- but also by a variety of non-physical design factors such as policies, practices and services.

- Do you trust that the people you would have to go to for help will be able to respond sensitively if you have been sexually assaulted?

- Do you have information that you need about sexual assaults that have happened on your campus?

- How long do you have to wait for a walk home or escort service to pick you up?

- Do you know who/what office to call for assistance?

The following is a sample checklist for auditing the non-physical environment of the campus; it is meant to be added to and expanded according to the needs of each campus.

Auditing the Non-Physical Environment: Policies, Procedures and Services

- *Sample questionnaire:*

1) Are there policies on sexual assault or harassment on your campus?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective are they?
□ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

Comment: _____
_____

2) Does your campus have a clear policy to address racism?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective is it?
□ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

Comment: _____
_____

3) Does your campus have a clear policy on sexism?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective is it?

Comment: _____
_____

4) Does your campus have a clear policy to address homophobia?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective is it?
□ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

Comment: _____
_____

5) Are self-defence courses on the Wen-do model of awareness, avoidance and action offered free of charge on campus?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective are they?
□ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

Comment:_____
_____

6) Is there an escort or walkhome service on campus?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

In your opinion, how effective is it?
□ poor □ satisfactory □ good □ very good

Comment: _____
_____

An expanded checklist might include the following:

7) Are there emergency telephones on your campus?
□ yes □ no □ don't know

How many telephones are there throughout the campus? _____ □ don't know

List the location of each emergency telephone:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

For each emergency telephone ask:

- Is the telephone easy to identify?
- Is it clearly visible?
- Does the telephone box or post identify your location?
- Is it accessible?
- Are there parked cars surrounding it, snowbanks blocking it?
- How well maintained is it?
- How long a wait for assistance?

Auditing relationships:

Personal relations can also be audited. It may be that there is a man at work or in class who is bothersome. A woman may notice that she never feels comfortable having to walk past a particular man or group of men or series of pin-ups of naked women in the hallway.

Since most women are assaulted by men they either know or are acquainted with, it is important for women to pay attention to their intuition about people. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

Even auditing your relationship with a date or boyfriend is important since it is now becoming clear that assaults by husbands, friends and acquaintances are fairly common.

After the Audit: Making Changes

Questions to Ask:

- Did the audit process include representation from all constituencies who work, study and live on campus? Was there participation and support from relevant departments, committees, offices and associations (as more fully described on pages 14-17 of this Guide)? If all communities were not able to participate in the audit, then this is the time to engage them.

- Are there any groups or individuals that should be involved in the post-audit process that were not involved in the audit itself? Are the key stakeholders involved? All groups or individuals concerned about women's safety should be included in the post-audit process.

- Has enough information been collected to prepare recommendations? Were enough women consulted about their concerns? Consider holding focus groups/small meetings to give those who did not participate in the audit a chance to identify and name their concerns and have input into the process.

- Has one section or sector of the campus been overlooked? If it has, consider collecting further information by conducting small supplementary audits or by distributing a short questionnaire on women's safety.

Organizing the Findings:

After the audit is completed, most likely there will be a lot of information about changes to be made.

One way of organizing the information is to group together all the points on one physical feature such as 'lighting' or 'signage'. Comments about how far a woman has to go to get help, whether there are enough telephones near by, and how likely it is that other people might witness an assault can be brought together under 'isolation' factors.

Another way of organizing the results from the checklist are by geographic location or campus function -- the various safety factors related to all parking lots or the residences.

Sometimes a place is so poorly designed that there aren't any real solutions, only bandaid ones. But it is still important to identify and name a problem, even where there is not a solution.

Identifying the problem is the beginning of changing the way future buildings and spaces are designed.

Evaluating the Findings:

An evaluation of the findings of the audit will help identify the starting point for work after the audit.

The first step in the evaluation is to review each section or component of the organized findings and to identify key issues and concerns.

The second step is to convert the identified issues and concerns into recommendations. For example, if the audit findings show that buildings are difficult to identify and to locate, then the recommendation might be that a comprehensive and consistent system of signs that could be seen both day and night and be read by sighted and visually impaired people be developed and installed throughout the campus.

The third step is to organize the recommendations into an order of priority which reflect the needs and concerns as identified in the audit findings.

Presenting the Findings and Working for Change:

Whether the findings and recommendations are written in a report and/or presented at a meeting, it is important to articulate women's safety issues as a priority. Currently there are many competing pressures for scarce resources and university and college campuses and women's safety concerns have not traditionally been considered.

It is time to put women's safety at the top of the priority list.

ENDNOTES

1. Solicitor General of Canada, "Female Victims of Crime," Bulletin 4, *Canadian Urban Victimization Survey*, 1985.

2. Brickman, Julie and John Briere, "Incidence of Rape and Sexual Assault in an Urban Canadian Population," *International Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1985.

3. For example, Judith L. Herman, "Considering Sex Offenders: A Model of Addiction," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol 13(4), 1988.

4. Dimare, Charles J. and Lule Korsgen, "Rape and Sexual Assault: Civil Liability of Colleges and Universities," *Nova Newsletter*, #4, 1990.

5. Hirsch, Kathleen, "Fraternities of Fear. Gang Rape, Male Bonding, and the Silencing of Women," in *Ms.*, Sept./Oct. 1990.

Further Reading:

Ms. magazine Vol.1, No. 2, 1990
- special section on everyday violence against women, including an article on fraternities

Women and Environments
(Fall '89/Winter'90)
- special issue on Urban Safety

I Never Called It Rape - Robin Warshaw, Harper and Row, 1988.

Fraternity Gang Rape - Peggy Reeves Sanday, New York University Press, 1990.

Moving Forward:Making Transit Safer for Women
- (A joint study by METRAC, the TTC, Metro Police, 1989)

Women in Safe Environments Report (W.I.S.E.)
- (A joint study by METRAC, Women Plan Toronto, and York University, 1987)

The Safe City Report, Toronto City Council, 1988

Out of the Classroom: A Chilly Campus Climate for Women - Roberta M. Hall and Bernice R. Sandler.

Please help us help other colleges and universities make their campuses safer and more comfortable.

By letting us know the results of your audits and other personal safety initiatives, we can assist other institutions and communities with similar challenges.

Please send any in-progress or completed documentation or reports to:

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